

## How Youth Is Wasted #2

Ecclesiastes 12:1b-7; Psalm 89:13

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What is it to waste something? Is it simply not to gain the earthly profit from it that you could have received had you been more wise or more knowledgeable? If that is the case, then most acts of charity should be considered a waste, for there is usually not a financial return that you expect to receive from showing mercy to others. However, charity and mercy are not wasted when bestowed for God's glory upon those who are legitimately needy, for the Lord does promise that mercy given will beget mercy ("Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" Matthew 5:7).

I would submit that to waste implies that one has foolishly misused what has been given by God in spending it upon that which is contrary to love for God, contrary to the will of God, and contrary to the glory of God. Thus, it is not a waste for mothers to stay at home and to instruct their children in the home, even though more money might be generated by a second income; for Christian mothers do so out of love for God, according to the will of God, and to the glory of God. It was not a waste for the widow to give her last mite into the treasury of God's House under the observation of Christ, or for Mary to pour out that expensive ointment upon the feet of Christ as an act of love. It was not or is not a waste for past and present witnesses of Christ to suffer for Him, even though it may mean the loss of one's reputation, one's job, one's family/friends, one's possessions, one's freedom, or even one's life. Dear ones, that is not to waste what God has given to you, but rather to employ what God has given to you in His service. That is not a waste, but in reality a gain to you of a glorious heavenly reward. And so likewise, it is a gain and not a waste to you to remember your Creator in the days of your youth. To the contrary, it is a waste of many years to wait until you are old, weak, sick, feeble, and dying to finally remember your Creator. Just as it is a waste of your body to abuse it for the first fifty years of your life, so it is a waste of many years to wait to remember your Creator until you are old and feeble.

Again, we turn to the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7. Last Lord's Day we considered the first main point from this text: Remember Your Creator while You Are Young (Ecclesiastes 12:1a). This Lord's Day we turn our attention to the second main point from our text: Remember Your Creator before Old Age and Death Hinder You (Ecclesiastes 12:1b-7).

### **II. Remember Your Creator before Old Age and Death Hinder You (Ecclesiastes 12:1b-7).**

A. In Ecclesiastes 12:1a, we learned what God through Solomon commanded us: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." We should obviously remember at all times the commandments of the Lord, but there are certain commandments that the Lord seems to especially commend by calling us to remember and not to forget them, and this is one of them (just as is true of the Fourth Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" Exodus 20:8-11). The Lord knows how prone we are to forget what is good and necessary for us. Isn't it amazing how well we can remember phone numbers, names of people, birthdays, recipes, songs, lines from movies, statistics about favorite sports teams or players, and yet how easy it is for us to forget the God who created and provides for us, and who saved and sanctifies us, and shall judge us on that final day? Dear ones, you do remember what is important to you. Does not the forgetfulness of your duties to God and your neighbor, forgetfulness of the promises of God, forgetfulness of all that you have for which to be thankful to the Lord, or forgetfulness of the needs of other brethren for which to pray, say something about how important those matters are to you in comparison to all that you do remember so very well? You may not judge your forgetfulness of your Creator to be so serious because it is only a sin of omission or because you do not intend to forget—you just forget. But remember this if you do

not remember anything else from this sermon: You remember what is of greatest importance to you, and if you do not remember your Creator throughout the day, it is simply because He is not that important to you—He is not your life or your reason for living. This is a most serious and grave sin that cannot be ignored without serious consequences to your soul. For how shall you escape God’s judgment if you forget, ignore, or neglect so great a Savior or so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3)?

B. In Ecclesiastes 12:1b through verse 7, Solomon now shifts from your duty to remember your Creator in the days of your youth to reasons for the command. The primary (though unstated) reason for obeying this command is because God, your Creator, so commands it by His almighty authority. That reason, all by itself, is sufficient in itself to warrant your immediate and whole-hearted obedience. However, the Lord graciously reasons with you as a kind heavenly Father, instructing you to heed His command for two other reasons as well.

C. Let us consider the first stated reason as to why you are to obey this divine command from the Preacher, Solomon: There are difficult days (or evil days) coming as you grow older. Solomon states, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH, WHEN THOU SHALT SAY, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

1. Solomon seeks to give you, children, youth, and young adults, reasons to seriously consider why it is so important to remember the Lord in faith, hope, and love, and to commit all of your ways to the Lord while you are young. What are evil days? Solomon does not use “evil” here in the sense of days that are morally evil, but rather in the sense of days that are painfully difficult, days that are filled with calamity, trial, and physical affliction (in the same sense that “evil” is used in Isaiah 45:7). Such days will indeed come if you live a long life. Please don’t deceive yourself into thinking that living a long life means you will have good health and a fit body and then one day just peacefully die in your sleep. Dear ones, Solomon is painting for you a very realistic picture of the physical pain and sorrows that generally await those whose bodies deteriorate with age. Perhaps you can by taking good care of your body extend your life an extra 25 years—that’s great. However, that last 25 years will be quite different than the first 25 years in what you are able or unable to do. Solomon also says about the latter years of your life: “when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” Solomon is not saying that as Christians reach those older years of their life that there is no joy in the Lord, no peace of mind, no satisfaction in Christ, or no pleasures enjoyed in earthly comforts at all. He is simply saying that so often with age come such bodily misery, discomfort, pain, and disability that natural pleasures that were once enjoyed in the strength of one’s youth are faint memories. Thus, dear children, youth, and young adults, don’t bank on remembering your Creator with all the strength and vigor of your youth when you are old, because it will not happen—you will not have it to give—you will have wasted those precious years of your youth. And as was said in the previous sermon on this text, do not think that if you turn your back upon your Creator in your youth and rather go after your own dreams, that you will even desire or want to remember your Creator when you are old or that God will grant you the grace to repent of having wasted so much of your life on the pleasures of this life in satisfying the lusts of your flesh. Forgetting God does not usually begin with a complete and total forgetfulness, but rather begins slowly—a little here and a little there gradually. One becomes lazy in times of secret worship, or misses family worship occasionally and seeks to excuse it. Your love for your music, movies, sports, work, family, education becomes more important to you than your love for Christ. Christ is increasingly pushed out of your mind. He is no longer consciously your life and your chief reason for living. You have begun to live chiefly for family, friends, fun, fortune, and fame. Dear ones, it has been so wisely said that once you allow the head of the serpent into the tent, it will not be long before the whole body follows. The decisions you make now in either remembering your Creator or in forgetting your Creator will affect you for years to come and perhaps for all eternity.

2. Solomon now uses metaphorical language in Ecclesiastes 12:2-6 to paint a visual picture

of how the body falls into disrepair so often when you reach your older years. It would appear that Solomon has taken the image of a house or some castle and likened it to this house of dust or this castle of flesh and blood (that is, your physical body). Now if you are tempted to think within yourself that this picture is really depressing and gloomy, remember that God Himself (through His inspired writer, Solomon) is driving a point home that you cannot fail to receive with faith, with love, and with obedience without severe consequences to your own soul.

a. The older years of life for most will mean that they will not be able to enjoy the light or life that is represented by the sun, moon, and stars, but will find increasingly that the darkness of death and the cloudy days of bodily afflictions seem to increase and swallow them up (Ecclesiastes 12:2).

b. In the older years of life, Solomon says the hands and the arms will grow weary and tremble for lack of strength (“In the day of when the keepers of the house shall tremble” Ecclesiastes 12:3). Solomon, no doubt had keepers or men stationed around his house to protect him. The hands and the arms are the keepers of your body—the primary parts of your body that are used to protect yourself against those who would do you harm. When your hands and arms grow weak, will you have the strong right arm of the Lord to fight for you against the world, the flesh, and the devil (Psalm 89:13)?

c. In the older years of life, the legs will slow down in their pace and strength (“and the strong men shall bow themselves” Ecclesiastes 12:3). It was those who had strong legs that served as messengers to run in carrying the messages of Solomon to his subordinates. When these physical legs fail you, will you have the power of God to run the race that is set before you, so that you run and do not grow weary (Isaiah 40:29-31)?

d. Next, in the latter years of life your teeth (or grinders) don’t work very well due to decay or much use through the years and many (if not all of them) are removed (“and the grinders cease because they are few” Ecclesiastes 12:3). When these teeth that chew the physical food that you eat fail you, will you be able to eat of the heavenly bread (even the Lord Jesus Christ) by faith alone?

e. Then note that the eyes are said to grow dim with age as well (“and those that look out of the windows be darkened” Ecclesiastes 12:3). The windows through which you see God’s creation around you are your eyes, but there is coming a day (if it is not already the case with many of you) that these windows don’t let as much light into them as they once did. They seem to be dirty and blurry. Dear ones, it is one thing not to see clearly with these physical eyes, but oh, the damage of not seeing clearly with the eye of faith. Plead with Christ to heal your sight and anoint your spiritual eyes with His healing eye salve (Revelation 3:17-18).

f. The loss of hearing by varying degrees often accompanies the aging process, states Solomon (“And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low” Ecclesiastes 12:4) How people mourn the loss of hearing, but how much a greater loss it is not to be able to hear the Lord as He speaks to you by His Word and Spirit. Dear ones, if you do not desire to be deaf spiritually to the voice of God before you die and go to meet Him, listen to Him now as He speaks to you.

g. As death approaches in the process of aging, sound sleep often vanishes with it, so that “he shall arise up at the voice of the bird” (Ecclesiastes 12:4). The slightest worries and concerns will have one waking up at all hours of the night. Rest and ability to sleep soundly is a great blessing from the Lord, but the greatest rest you can ever find is rest for your souls (Matthew 11:28-29).

h. The vocal cords become very strained as one ages so that even those who once had beautiful voices in younger years find their voices to fail them when they grow older (“and all the daughters of music shall be brought low” Ecclesiastes 12:4). What music and words fill your voice with song? Do you have greater pleasure in singing the songs of the world than you do in singing psalms of praise to your great and glorious Creator?

i. Solomon continues by alluding to the fears that often overtake the elderly who are afraid of climbing due to their fear of falling and fear of dying (“Also when they shall be afraid of that

which is high, and fears shall be in the way” Ecclesiastes 12:5). Dear ones, the only way to vanquish the fear of death is to cast yourself upon Him who alone has conquered and overcome death. Any other worldly way to deal with death is really avoiding the reality of death and the actual consequences of death.

j. “And the almond tree shall flourish” (Ecclesiastes 12:5) mostly refers to the white blossoms of the almond tree which pose a fitting picture of the white and graying head of those who are aging. Some of us already see the almond tree abundantly flourishing. But dear ones, the white hair is nothing of which to fear or of which to be ashamed. For it is a crown of glory to those who remember their Creator even in the latter years of their life (“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness” Proverbs 16:31).

k. “And the grasshopper shall be a burden” (Ecclesiastes 12:5) likely refers to the difficulty of the elderly in carrying anything heavy. Even the lightest of burdens seems to those who are old as a great weight upon their shoulders. The Lord Jesus promises even to those who cannot bear any weight physically due to their advanced age that His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). No matter how great the burden of affliction and trial you may be called to bear in this life, your loving Father will never give you more than you can bear by His grace (1 Corinthians 10:13).

l. “And desires shall fail” (Ecclesiastes 12:5) refers to many of the earthly desires for food, drink, and pleasures which you had when you were young. These will increasingly give way to merely a survival mode of existence because so many of the bodily functions you once were able to use to enjoy these earthly blessings and comforts from the Lord are diminished to such a great degree. That is why it is vanity and futility to place your desires chiefly upon anything that shall pass away, for your desire for them shall fail, “because man goeth to his long home [i.e. his long home in the grave], and the mourners go about the streets” (Ecclesiastes 12:5). Dear ones, only your desire for Christ shall not fail in your old age as you cling to Him, hope in Him, love Him, and obey Him. The theme of your life must be, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain” Philippians 1:21.

m. What is described in Ecclesiastes 12:6 would seem to be that of a well or cistern out of which the cord, pitcher, and wheel that pull the water from the well are broken. This would seem to describe the very dying process itself when the very last breaths are taken with great struggle and the well of physical life is broken altogether. It is an amazing thing to behold the final breath breathed before death. When from all outward appearances life ceases. It is so final. There is no turning back. It leaves an impression upon you that is indelibly written on the memory, how weak and frail man is, no matter how strong one appeared in his/her youth. Man is but dust. Therefore, the Holy Spirit of God gives you this reason to remember now your Creator in the days of your youth because the years to come (when you grow old) will not make it easier to remember Him, but if anything (from a human perspective) will make it more difficult to remember Him.

D. Solomon, having stated the first reason why you are to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, namely because there are difficult days coming as you grow older in which you will find it increasingly difficult to remember your Creator with the strength you had in your youthful days, now moves to the second stated reason why you are to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, namely because there are dying days coming in which there will be no second chances or opportunities to remember your Creator here upon the earth (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

1. First, Solomon addresses what will happen to your earthly mortal bodies as they are laid in the grave: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Your earthly bodies which were made by God from the dust of the earth will deteriorate in the grave and return to the earth from which they came, just as the Lord declared after the fall of Adam and Eve, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19). There are certainly no second chances for the body in the grave. If you have not remembered your Creator in this life, there will be no further opportunities to do so in the grave.

2. Second, Solomon addresses what will happen to your immortal spirit as it leaves your body at death: “and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Although the body of man was created from the dust of the earth, the Lord immediately created the spirit of man when He breathed into man at his creation the breath of life (according to Genesis 2:7). It is in a conscious state of mind that the spirit leaves the body and returns to God, in order that it may appear before His tribunal and from there either ushered into the glory of heaven or cast into the torments of hell (as is seen from the description of this in Luke 16:19-31). Dear ones, just as certainly as the body shall return to the dust from which it came, so as certainly shall the spirit return to God who gave it. Are you ready now to stand before the Lord or would you like to make a few preparations, set a few things straight with people, confess a few sins before you appear before the Lord? Don’t wait until it is too late to remember your Creator. Remember Him now while He may be found (Isaiah 55:6-7).

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